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POEMS

MY LADY'S BOOK

MONOGAMY

THE HELPING HAND

THE HAPPY TREE

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THE COMING REVOLUTION IN GREAT BRITAIN

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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G. G.



# ODES



**TO BARBARA**





**Y**OU are so young,  
 Yet older than the eldest things that be  
 —Older than cliffs affronted by the sea,  
 That crumble into legend, shelf by shelf;  
 Older than bright Orion, lost for lust,  
 Dust-born and dimming back again to dust;  
 Older than memory's first incarnate hour;  
 Older than age itself;  
 And sprung  
 In life's immortal April like a flower.  
 Now, as you turn  
 Where the high road's cut off against the light,  
 Behind you in a golden circle burn  
 All the round days circumferenced by night;  
 And the green leaves that frame the road and you  
 In contrast with that gold show darkly blue,  
 Save at the fringes where the sun spills through  
 And shakes them to a whirl and mist of fire:  
 Your hair, your bright hair, bright as young desire,  
 Wears the same halo: all your youth is strung  
 To urgent quiet in the poise you hold:  
 You are solitary there, you are fixed, you are free,  
 With rising sap wrought upwards like a tree  
 —A golden challenge, dressed and crowned with  
 gold.

O insolently innocent,  
Flower-like for beauty, tree-like for intent!  
O wantonly, provocatively pure!  
Ask your own heart, are you indeed so sure?  
Childhood, we know, is stable in its changes,  
And strong because so frail to the falling hour:  
The day goes black, yet soon with all its power  
Dies, and the new day cheers, and the new friend  
estranges:

But you, you growing, you becoming wise,  
Have lost your shining mutabilities:  
Too trustful now, you hold your God in trust:  
It hurts the heart to see you unafraid,  
Who to the bottomless future have betrayed  
The perilous perfection of your dust.  
What must be, must:  
The breathless beauty passes, the light thins;  
Not the light only, but the dark, begins  
To overflow its frontiers, mingle and fade  
Into a dull ubiquity of shade.  
And here and there a usual music wins  
Upon the silence, and the breaking and stirring  
Of tiny momentary processes  
Give back to the world its sense of seeking and  
erring—  
And hark! a wind in the trees.

Dear, be it so!  
You take my heaven in your two hands, and go,  
And I can never follow : and yet I know  
What thing you challenged here, and what you knew.  
Why should all beauty not belong to you?  
To whom, if not the singer, should belong  
The rare and dangerous excellence of song?—  
Clouds and a coming difference hold the air.  
You are so young; your youth's the surest thing;  
That alters not with the hour's altering;  
That was, before you were.  
In the beginning were you less than fair?—  
And what more can you win to?—Must you care?  
Clouds and the change—have you not known of  
these?—  
Reckoned their worth, and cared not? All things  
blend  
Now with the past, which is the future too;  
Voices there are and sudden silences  
And memories of youth—and you—  
And endless thoughts, and no thought in the end  
But the wind in the trees.

## II

I cannot thank you, Lord—because  
 I cannot understand  
 Why you at last, at last, have moved your hand,  
 Which was put forth between the sun and me  
 —Whose shadow was  
 A darkness on the earth and on the sea,  
 A darkness on all things that I have known.  
 I never understood why you shut out  
 The natural airs, and let me walk alone  
 Through lanes of trouble in the valley of doubt,  
 Hear at mere noon the nightjar's ragged shout,  
 And find June's flowers unblown or overblown.  
 I never understood why this should be,  
 And now I know not why it should have ended.  
 When I have tried to touch  
 The bark of trees, the flesh of friends—unfriended  
 My hand came back, its impotence was such,  
 And the numb fingers drooped, the numb heart  
     sagged.  
 But now—now—I am free  
 Suddenly: I can touch this friend, this tree,  
 And the lark sings at noon, and June's beflagged,  
 And bravely open shine the gates of Heaven;  
 The width of sky and cloud and wind is mine,  
 The sun's strong light runs through the soul like  
     wine,

And simple freedom is the body's leaven.  
You have dressed in fire, beatified with wings,  
The natural, sane, and ordinary things:  
By peace,  
By sheer release,  
By nothing but allowing pain to cease,  
By the cessation of a single curse,  
You have dowered me with the solid universe.  
I do not understand  
Why prison first, and freedom next, was planned :  
I do not understand  
Why still there are those who walk in the dark land,  
Hear all their music tortured, as if it came  
Transverse through dusty tapestries of shame;  
See all their constellations set awry  
'Twixt false horizons of derisive sky;  
And, when they touch their fellows, touch them not,  
But grope, and miss, and slip, and wither, and rot,  
Turning their senses to the hopes that die,  
Making of loveliness a loveless game.  
Those are the slaves ; my lot was long the same ;  
And those are still the slaves, and free am I.  
You, who put forth the darkness, lift for me your  
hand.  
Lord, Lord, I cannot thank : I cannot understand.

### III

Behold this huddled thing, this obscene heap,  
Knitting his muscles as he craves  
For stammering nerves a little trickle of sleep!  
—He has no hope of the good streams that sweep  
Calm from the height descending to the deep:  
As broad they are, as ample, as the snows  
That cover up earth's blasphemy of graves;  
But these move in their brightness—a white flood,  
A long procession of abundant waves,  
To consecrate, to close  
Peace on the brain and healing on the blood.  
—All health, all peace, all calmness, this forgoes,  
And asks only, with endless twitch and shake,  
For the sharp momentary drop to slake  
One pang of fever: if at all sleep comes,  
Through it, in all his veins, the tiny drums  
Beat, and then prick, then gather to a shout,  
And in a blare of colours bright with pain  
Shatter the half-sweet sickness of his doubt,  
And hale him out  
From respite worse than torture: and again  
The four walls stand  
—The same four walls.—The almond blossom blows  
Outside, beyond: the roads go up and down:  
The wind has changed the colour of the land,

And there are lights and voices in the town.  
—The same four walls shut in this broken thing,  
Spring after almond-bringing spring,  
And in the prison it is always cold.  
The fever fire burns chilly in the old,  
And he, if ever young, was young so long ago,  
When the door clang'd and the four walls closed in.  
Well, we believe in God. God punishes sin,  
And this man was a sinner, we suppose.  
The hand that shut him here behind the bars,  
That made this huddled thing, this heap obscene,  
Has set the stars asunder from the stars,  
With only space and silence blown between.



#### IV

You know the gray that paints the undergrowth  
Of English woods in summer, when the light  
Still holds the sky, and the first star is loth,  
And, between trees, over the knots and strings  
Of weed and creeper, into eddy and bight,  
Air flows like water, changing the shapes of things;  
And all is lichen-coloured, pure and chill:  
The farewell voices from the distant hill  
Sound hollow and forlorn: yet there is peace:  
A sense of stay, fulfilment and release,  
As if the calm hour with weak hands could pull  
From its silver limbs time's dragging cords of steel,  
And stand without a breath, content to feel  
How wide the world is, and how beautiful.  
Then—sudden and immedicable change!  
On grotesque foliage and elfin bole  
Dark fall the shadows suddenly, and strange:  
The body of that hour has lost its soul.  
Ev'n thus  
It falls, dear heart, with us:  
The structure of the world is changed about  
The manikins that plot eternity:  
They see the beauty of the world go out  
And darkness come, and that is all they see.  
We in an evening solitude were free

Together, and breathed not, hushed and havened  
there

—Two ships becalmed in silver seas of air.

Through the uncoloured leaves one star showed  
bright;

Then more stars came, and with them came the night,  
And with the night came fear.

—The story has no other ending, dear!

How could I comfort, who was stricken too?

You put out little hands to thwart the dark,  
And the dark covered you.

'Hark!' said your lost voice in the strangeness,

'Hark!

Some one has called—the noise of it went by

Like a live thing just now!'—What answered I,

Or what could answer, knowing the thing you heard

Was your own childhood's farewell word?

I could not comfort then, I cannot comfort now:

The strong night breaks the mortal vow,

And the world changes, and a child is dead.

But, dear, when all the woe's fulfilled,

And conquering night established near and far,

Then comes the turning of the fluctuant war:

The first cold beams of dawn begin to gild

Foliage and bole, creeper and weed; and red

Flushes the hollow of the sky: one star

Pale on the rim of climbing day is left,  
And then no star at all:  
With gold, with gold, the heart of the wood is cleft;  
Invincible the shafts of morning fall;  
The morning makes the world and finds it good;  
The morning comes like trumpets in the wood.

# V

The bird's song is a hollow round,  
 And silence is the core of sound;  
 And we, who have in either hand to weigh  
 The alternate infinities of night and day;  
 Who, in the heart's impregnable alcove,  
 Hug the huge jewel of our Maker's love;  
 Whose thoughts are constellations, and our speech  
 A dancing marvel in the mouth of each  
 —What to the Giver have we rendered—we  
 The brave, the immortal—lovers, poets, kings,  
 Climbers of mountains, sailors of the sea,  
 Masters of many things?  
 Once to their God men gave the things he gave them,  
 Bargaining a bullock's fat and basted thigh  
 Against the blinding mercy that should save them  
 From all the creeping terrors of the earth,  
 And all the falling terrors of the sky!  
 But we, of later more considerate birth,  
 Have driven a stranger bargain: God shall save,  
 We say, none but the prisoner and the slave:  
 Lo, for salvation he shall set apart  
 Only the humble and the contrite heart!  
 Nothing he shall receive  
 Save what's so broken that earth has done with it:  
 Pride, joy, and beauty—these are for the Pit:

The rest to Heav'n we leave.  
Broken and contrite—shattered, driven, maimed,  
What am I worth to God? The choice is his.  
He has made his weapon of the hard thing that is,  
And hunted man into humility.  
Where the head's bent above the bended knee,  
The unnameable is named,  
The filthy are made clean, the guilty go unblamed:  
Those others of the world are damned—but free.  
—Nay, are there any others? Who has claimed  
One step in his own strength? God wills it so—  
Yet, heart of daring, O  
To stand up in the dawn and draw the light  
With strong hands forward in the teeth of night;  
To scatter the rebellious stars; to feast  
Body and spirit on the burning East;  
And strong, and confident, and clean, and wise,  
Give back to God his own infinities!—  
Not, not repentance, not contrition, not  
The choice of those who, having thrown the lot  
And lost the earth and the desire thereof  
And all the sweet superlatives of love,  
Turn to salvation as a second best:  
But bravery, but youth, but zest,  
What man were proud to give, and God to take.  
—Well, God has chosen. It's for him to say.

He has his way,  
And our hearts break.  
Two days ago a sacred something died :  
I had not thought that it could perish so :  
Two days ago I learnt all God will let me know.  
—Two days ago? *Two thousand years ago,*  
*At that ninth hour when the great veil was rent,*  
*And earth and sky were one dark continent*  
*For one man crucified!*

## VI

I went away from you,  
Not as they go whose light aerial fires  
Provoke their blood to mutable desires,  
But slowly, but with sorrow smitten through.  
I went away from you who are  
My peace, my courage, and my star ;  
My spirit, moving in me as I move ;  
My sum of hope ; my compass of surprise ;  
My seagull, white and wanton in black skies ;  
My storm and calm of love.  
I went : the silence made by your song's ceasing  
Closed in, a prison ignorant of releasing :  
Hard silence, solider than sound,  
Enfolded me around :  
And, seeking there distraction, there I found  
Silence, a curse increasing.  
You know not, nor have had the means to know,  
How the bad noises that the ear ignores  
Fill the gaunt halls where the sick heart explores :  
Unreal sounds, unhappy ; pricking airs,  
In complex nothingness woven to and fro  
To make a senseless pattern unawares.  
Hell's a negation fashioned so :  
A false conclusion, a wrong argument :  
A labyrinth of malign intent :

A prison bigger than the sky :  
A prison with unnumbered doors,  
And no way out : and in that Hell was I.  
Suffering is easy—I have suffered too,  
In the sane world where sound is sound  
And silence silence : but to go from you  
Was more than loss of what is lost and found.  
You, of the perfect patience ; you, the clear  
Light set for ships to watch for from the sea,  
Shone over the dark solitude for me,  
And here awaited me, and I am here  
—Drawn by such influence as is known to them  
Who, far astray among the unmapped isles,  
Hear suddenly a change upon the wind,  
And set their sails, and stem  
Storms feared no longer and the impotent wiles  
Of ocean, and have left their grief behind :  
They have not seen the light whereto they sail,  
But know it reached, and furl their sails and sing  
Heart-twisting chanties of their home-coming,  
And turn their torments to a traveller's tale.  
O light above the sea, far-seen, and known  
Further than sight, ev'n to all travel's end :  
O harbour where all ships at last must come,  
Immovable altar and abiding throne,  
Soul of the sanctities of home,



And simple-hearted friend!  
—And more, how pitifully more, to me,  
Who in that faithful patience see  
More than the glory and beauty of high love,  
More than the surety of the truth of God,  
More than the throne, the altar and the rod,  
And the great light above  
—More than all these you are, to one so tired  
As I, who went away from you  
And in the wilderness desired  
What there I could not trust for true:  
More than all these, now that I stumble back,  
Drawn blind along the lucid track  
Till the full light is found, and I can kneel  
Safe in its warmth, and rest my head with tears  
Upon your knee as if I were a child,  
And feel  
Your fingers stroke away my fears—  
Till I am quieted and reconciled,  
And the bad silence shrivels and is dead.  
The old known memories wake among the stirs  
And tremors of the winds and hours  
—All the good simple earthly comforters.  
Here let me kneel, abandoned to your touch,  
With not one syllable said  
For sad propitiation of life's powers.

I love you, little faithful love, so much :  
You whom I left have never loved me less,  
And that's the utter healing. For so long  
I have been ignorant of love and song  
—You waited for me, that's my happiness—  
I have been ignorant of health and sleep.  
Hold me, and let me weep !

## VII

I asked too much of love.  
How should that be?  
Is any largeness set above  
That one infinity?  
What should be richer, whether in day or dark,  
Than that full circle of returning things?  
Lo, what a bubbling music lifts the wings  
Of the delighted lark,  
Through clearest air, immaculable blue,  
To the full height and absolute of you!  
The range of various and contentious seas,  
Have you not ringed and known the whole of these?  
What is there left, or what can life devise,  
That is not love's abundant enterprise?  
The wail and heartbreak of the violin,  
The round content of oboe and of flute,  
The sharp sweet throbbing of the harp, the din  
And jargon of the triangle and bells,  
The boastful brass that pants and swells,  
And the clear wood whose voice is fine and thin:  
The faint  
Stab of the muted strings, and the complaint  
Of the hoarse 'cello, and the thrum  
Of the vociferous and intolerant drum:  
The haze and shimmer of according notes,

The crossed and lifted swords of music's fire,  
That smite the earth into a living choir,  
And call forth singing from immortal throats:  
These to one bosom love can gather in,  
These to a single song can love transmute—  
Giver and guide and gatherer of dreams  
That in their scattering and return are free,  
Ev'n as the whole wild pattern of earth's streams  
Has birth and end and meaning in one sea!  
Why, go to love and ask it for the worth  
Of liberal Heaven and grateful earth,  
The seed, the soil, the flower, the corn,  
Beauty eternally re-born!—  
And love will give, and never miss the gift.  
When the young love is breaking into flower,  
And stands upon the border of her hour,  
Alert, and sweet, and swift,  
How different does she show  
From all the flowers that ever bloomed in time!  
This separate sovereign loveliness can rhyme  
Only with its own moment. What's to know,  
To gather from that shy and trustful pride?  
Or what has innocence to hide?  
Then go—  
Go to her, brave her, ask! Be sure  
She is as kind as she is pure:

She slept, and wakes, and tries to keep  
The hush and flame of sleep.  
Go to her!—Nay:  
She falters, ruddy with amaze,  
A dryad half awake,  
With wonder wid'ning in her gaze  
Like ripples on a lake,  
And, asking, you may hurt her. Come away,  
While there is time, while all is yet to say,  
Nor tempt the moment. Love, you know, is strange:  
Men call love changeless, but the world will change.  
I asked too much of love, I know not how:  
Her eyes laughed at me under a clear brow,  
And then one day nothing was as before.  
Through the still hours—O debt no love can pay!—  
My love lay quiet till the end of day,  
And then rose up, and went, and came no more.

## VIII

You see this child  
Who in to-morrow knows not yesterday:  
Let him stand for the symbol of that wild  
Pulse of the world's untaught unteachable heart  
Where all incredible emotions start  
Like dust of flowers in the sun's sudden ray.  
—You know the hush before  
The orchestra begins:  
You shiver at the shutting of a door,  
And sicken at your new-remembered sins.  
—My dear,  
Do you remember, in the early year,  
When for a little silence we were one,  
How our thought took the colour of the sun?  
The waves of apple-blossom broke  
In brilliant foam against the blue:  
You moaned upon my lips, and stirred and spoke,  
And then were still again. The world was you.  
The world was what your loving is  
—A shaft of light through dust of mysteries.  
The world was what your lips forgot to speak  
Upon my lips. I looked up and saw wings  
Like swords bare in the sunlight: black they rose,  
First black, then silver—silver again, and black,  
In long attenuated track

Across the thin faint daytime: love grew weak,  
Sagged, and forgot its own rememberings:  
Our hearts, unwilling, knew what music knows;  
And you went from me as the silence goes  
At that first crying of the attempted strings.  
My arms were hungrier than a mother's breast  
That cannot suckle the soft lips it needs.  
My hopes were bruised and broken reeds.  
My mouth said: 'God knows best,'  
And my heart gave my mouth the lie.  
The black and silver wings against the sky  
Flew to the peace that you had robbed me of.  
—O unforeseen and unreturning love,  
We had had our moment! Every moment after  
Was bitter with the hint of your return,  
And you returned, and were not you. The laughter  
Of devils drowns the cries of souls that burn,  
And that's the secret dreadfulness of hell.  
Had you been harsh, it had been well:  
But you were tender when you came,  
And leant to me with the old smile and kiss:  
You said: 'Do you remember that, and this?'—  
And nothing was the same.  
—You see this child. He waits  
Unconscious, by the undivulging gates:  
His ear has heard the tuning: and, intent,

He guesses what shall leap and flower  
To top the tall triumphant hour  
When instrument is wed to instrument.  
So is it with the childish heart of man  
That has learnt nothing since the world began.  
O infinitely touching!—pilgrim still  
Up the recurring disappointment hill!  
O heart as breakable as the first heart was  
That faltered, strange to loss!  
O heart as flower-like, with each morning new,  
Brave to drink disappointment up like dew!  
O vessel squandered on the careless sea!  
O my one love, the one love gone from me!  
—It is not age that breaks and stales:  
It is not impotence that fails:  
It is not weakness that despairs!  
—The rash and splendid and impatient airs  
That blow about the meadows and the shores,  
And search the noon for clouds, and shake the bells  
To clamour in unconquered citadels,  
And take the stars and stations in their course  
—These, it is these, that break the heart, that lose  
What they have learnt not to refuse:  
Sweet dancing fools,  
So large, so bold, so ignorant of the span  
Set for the reach and amplitude of man!—



Ours was the summer hour : and now the tune,  
Rhythmic, returns according to the rules,  
And ends not late nor soon.  
You see this child : he, ev'n as you and I,  
Will watch that black and silver stab the sky,  
Flying into the silence, flying free.  
Why tell him what he will not understand ?  
The ship forever puts off from the land,  
And finds forever nothing but the sea.  
It burns—the flower-flame that the leaves uncover,  
Setting the heart free to accept the spring  
—The mendicant of morning, and the lover  
Of the unforeseen and unreturning thing.

## IX

Was it then I that went away, or you?  
There are two pictures clear before my eyes.  
Dreams are not hard for truth to improvise,  
Nor truth for dreams to squander and undo.  
You have watched how birds will scatter as by rhyme,  
Wheeling, extending, keeping place and time;  
How the slow suns and planets quick  
Have danced their own arithmetic:  
How, sure and huge, through history's nebulous stir,  
The follies and the wars recur.  
These have their measure, their accordance these,  
Ev'n as the pendulum of tidal seas:  
But the bewilderment and smart  
Of the flawed mirror and cracked heart  
Set the twin flanges of the mind apart,  
And make a silence where  
The forest fires of madness start  
And are lifted on the air.  
They bring the treacherous and the various pains  
That only my sad brethren understand,  
And worlds as numerous as the disordered grains  
Of blown and tortured sand.  
It seemed you went because I frightened you:  
It seemed you stayed, and I must go:  
There are two pictures; both are true,

And each so absolute in woe,  
It makes perdition pleasant. Let me be!—  
Sit with your knees hunched, looking out to sea,  
And borrowing from the future all you miss  
In the refused or unattempted kiss.  
Be once again, and be forever now,  
Young and unhappy, with a grief as dear  
As that horizon slowly coming clear  
Between discurtaining vapours, which allow  
First but a silver dimness, then the pale  
Gleam of lost sea, and then the golden sail.  
O griefs as fatal as the unfolding hour,  
Rich and perpetual as the thrusting flower,  
Urgent as all creation, and as mist  
Tenuous! O broken heart and lips unknissed!—  
Your eyes are shadowed with the thoughts unknown,  
Stored in the brain—your masters, yet your own:  
Shadow of thought is mixed with light of tears:  
Your world is spangled with a double fire  
Of opal-coloured cloud—the clouds aspire,  
Part, and the sea gleams, and the sail appears.  
Your grief is gathered, concentrated, spent  
On that one ship's one message: sweet,  
You are so gentle and so innocent,  
You cannot, though you would,  
Into your own unhappiness retreat:

Your grief's as large as your love, and as free;  
They run like spells and blessings on the sea,  
And reach your ship, and bid its luck be good.  
—What have I said, or what recalled? The sin  
That burst my mind and let the madness in!  
For I it was—no other man than I—  
Who came where you sat pouring out your youth  
On fragile falsehoods of the mist, and truth  
Of sea, and sand, and sky,  
And tore you from the peace of tears,  
And gave leave to the jealous years  
To tread your flower-like fortunes in the mud,  
And break the pride that blossomed in your blood.  
So, all was spent. And who has led me back,  
By what unguessable track,  
To first perfection and the best of day?  
And is it you at all, and not some wraith,  
Born of my dead contentment's graveyard breath?  
Should I not rather say  
That here through years it has been mine to stay,  
And that you went, and now return?—Alas,  
The old tormenting question!—pictures twain  
Stamped on the civil warfare of the brain,  
That cross each other as they pass and pass,  
And yet are both so certain and so plain!  
—Well, wraith or whim or memory, what you will,

Let me sit down beside you, and be still,  
And watch the pale dislimning of the cloud,  
The sun so faithful and the sail so proud,  
And all so apt unto the still-fresh youth  
And shattering sweetness of accepted truth.  
I will not travel further. The ship's gone,  
The mists close in again, and night comes on,  
And when it falls we shall be sitting so,  
I, all too sorry for the wrong  
I did you long years since—so strangely long!—  
To know, or ask to know,  
The comfort of repentance: you, restored,  
By exquisite alchemy of Love the Lord,  
To that clear, beautiful and early sorrow.  
The gulls will cry about us as we sit.  
As for our love, I shall not speak of it,  
And you will have no word of it to say.  
Night's black but deepens the diurnal gray.  
Here's peace, and night, and after that the morrow.

## X

The big procession of the year begins;  
The dark earth breaks beneath the covering frost;  
The thrust of buried hope and beauty lost  
Joins issue with old tyranny, and wins.  
Hark!—the thin horn beyond the furthest hill  
Proclaims the day of pageant; laughter comes  
Along the water-course like beaten drums;  
The world's a cup for ecstasy to fill.  
Against the sun a fleece of cloud hangs white;  
Adventure knows not what it has to find;  
And up into the rainy brilliant wind  
The childish fingers push, expecting light.  
The first thoughts coming in your head  
Are of content and fellowship;  
A dust of green from tip to tip  
Of boughs innumerable is shed;  
And joy is what must happen soon,  
And faith is what the blackbird knows,  
And colour linked with colour flows  
About the country like a tune;  
And are these bells, or whirring wings,  
That lure, and climb, and call, and float?—  
Is that a bird, taking the perfect note,  
Or my own blood that sings?  
Lo! as the master's gesture lifts together

Tumult and wings of music in one flight,  
So the clear-fronted spirit of spring weather  
Has turned all airs and echoes to delight!  
—Yet were spring wasted, dissipated,  
Squandered, abandoned, casual here and there,  
In points and pinions of etherial brightness:  
In sudden whiteness  
Of waves that curl and break far out to sea:  
In sunny-sparkling peaks, elated  
Where only light can find them: in the free  
And wandering colour of the spray-cloud that shades  
The thunder and the glitter of cascades:  
In delicate, terrible, imperious, rare  
Jets of aspiring and enkindled air  
—So were spring spent, gone ere it came,  
In broken promise and lost flame,  
In memory of a voice heard calling through  
The hollow hour of sunset—gone and spent,  
Had it not been that you were innocent,  
And all spring's innocent fires at one in you.  
For how shall man's unhappy heart  
Not fear the future's various ghost,  
When, seeking to embrace the most,  
He lets the least depart?  
Mocked and tormented by his own wid'ning scope,  
And range of sorrow with sorrow still further  
ranging,

Dazzled by the changeless infinite in things  
    changing,  
And disappointed in the act of hope,  
He turns like a blind child to the warmth of spring  
This way, then that—the flame's in everything,  
And peace not anywhere. What you have done  
Is to give place and meaning to the sun.  
In you, achievement's real: in you, the hour  
Comes with intention and departs with power;  
Essential to the turning day,  
In evanescence fulfilling its very soul,  
Since its due purpose is to pass away  
—The cipher that illuminates the scroll,  
The part that means the whole.  
O sanity of swift desires,  
O unity of wandering fires,  
O chaste and free, serene and wild,  
O lovely mother-hearted child,  
To you, for you, to be in you fulfilled,  
The winds shake out the rain, the brown birds build,  
The sun comes up, the moments intervene,  
And the stars follow where the sun has been!  
Punctual the moments that the seasons breed,  
And packed with purpose as a flower with seed!—  
The captured and escaping airs  
Of forest and attuning hill



Enrich your praying with their prayers,  
And mix their music in your will.  
Your look consoles the quenched spark  
That should have crowned the Pleiades:  
For you the heav'n-defying lark  
Scatters his notes to find the seas:  
In you those earth-entangling lights,  
The fireflies of our mental nights,  
That make a million dawns at once,  
Pretending to the place of suns  
—The rhythm, the range, the bud, the flower,  
The music and the marching hour,  
The phantom cities that aspire  
Through cloud, and set the cloud on fire;  
All seeking, whispering, burning things;  
The ships with sails like sea-gulls' wings;  
The voices on the hills, the voice  
That tells the valley to rejoice;  
Confusion, wonder, effort, stir;  
Danger the bright discomforter;  
Spring's broken plenitude of light—  
Here in one harmony unite.  
You have plucked the flower nor lost the dew,  
And I have loved the world in you.

# SONNETS



I

**O** COLD remembrance, careful-careless kiss,  
That does not wake to hope with waking  
day,

And at the hour of bed-time does not say :

'That was for rapture, that for peace, but this

Burns for the night's more terrible auspices,

And pangs and sweets of doubt and disarray!—

Yet in one kiss two hearts found once the way  
From perfect ignorance to perfect bliss.

Love has so many voices, low and high,

Such range of reason, such delight of rhyme!

Yet when I asked love such a simple thing

As why the autumn comes where came the  
spring,

The only soul that answered me was I,

And love was silent then for the first time.

## II

Dear, think of youth!—the shining vassalage  
Of doubt to dream, of time to timeless birth;  
The worthiness of ardours hardly worth  
Their hour of posture on the morning stage,  
When wrong and insult called for happy rage,  
Not for lean compromise and sideways mirth;  
And grief, because it blacked the total earth,  
Was brighter than the guarded gleams of age.

Was youth so fair then, and was youth so kind?  
Was youth so true? Was youth indeed so young?—  
The body tense with soul, and every wind  
Loose in the hedgerows!—Well, that song is sung:  
Heap up the embers, dear, and draw the blind:  
Upon the fire the last, best dream is flung.

### III

See how our dreams are shrivelled in the fire!—  
And shall we close our books and nod our heads,  
And take our cold ways to our separate beds,  
And shut our eyes and hearts against desire?  
Nay, one last glance will never overtire  
The heart that locks its tears, the eye that sheds:  
Mark how the vibrant blues and lambent reds  
Mix their thin hisses in a muted choir!

The little worms of death have eaten love  
Where it lies buried with a tomb above—  
The little worms that know no other game,  
The fiery worms that die not, worms of hell!—  
Yet ah, the flaming beauty, loved too well,  
Of dreams that we abandon to the flame!

#### IV

The Prince of Darkness, as I understand,  
Is a most affable, complacent prince:  
His words that soothe, his theses that convince,  
Are like a green shade in a thirsty land.  
At the cross-roads he takes you by the hand:  
He cannot bear to watch you shiver and wince  
Between the painful and the pleasant—since  
The pleasant is the path himself has planned.

In the cold hour when we no longer care  
Whether our souls be saved or damned, we strain  
And agonise in impotence of prayer,  
Not for the saint's, not for the angel's station,  
But for the strength, the strength to choose again—  
To see salvation and to choose damnation.

# V

It is not so, though men have made it so  
 Till they have graven falsehood in truth's eyes:  
 They have set happiness for virtue's prize,  
 But happiness is virtue, as we know  
 Who have staked all upon life's mortal throw,  
 And wrung from death our immortalities:  
 Only the moment's happiness is wise,  
 And all the centuries are cold in woe.

Truth's eyes must still look outward: turned within,  
 They by inversion grow to falsehood. Far  
 Apart as the two selves of one self are  
 Is virtue's quiet from the trouble of sin:  
 And lo, the moment we were wise to win,  
 Hung in the dome of silence like a star!



## VI

The creeping hours have caught us unawares,  
And while we yet stand breathless from the thrill  
Of the warm noon, the twilight wide and chill  
Has stol'n the colour from the golden airs:  
The dead and equal light of evening bares  
The world of shade ere shade shall have its fill;  
And the vague gleams on river, fold, and hill  
Are lost and lonely as unanswered prayers.

Draw closer to me, dear: the greater need  
Must breed the greater solace. All about  
The moods and marvels of the day go out  
Like candles blown upon: the heat, the speed,  
Are sped: but all things bring their own redress,  
And love that's weary is not love the less.

## VII

We had no test, no standard—there's the fault:

We gauged not what we earned nor what we spent:

We loved, but knew not whither love was bent,  
Till to itself its blindness called a halt.

'Love is the salt of life—but if the salt

Have lost its savour?'—runs the argument:

What's left of lovely, what of excellent?

What shall we trust? what cleave to? what exalt?

Ah! dear, the test is that there is no test,

And the unanswering silences ring true.

How should the doers tell us what they do,  
Or the deep heart's confession stand confessed?

Once, to love love—then, to love you—seemed best;

But now the love of love is love of you.

### VIII

I marvel at you in the morning light,  
Where to your subtle braveries unfold :  
You look so tragic-pure, so crystal-cold,  
So warm with wonder and with love so bright.  
O beauty's strength that makes the world seem  
slight!  
O beauty's youth that makes our hopes seem old!—  
Withdrawn, withdrawn!—O hard to have and  
hold!  
O lost, and lost again, like faith in flight!

Could I but fix you thus!—with lips apart  
Drooping for melancholy of memories,  
Not yours but ours!—with eyes where ardours start  
Of childhood, avid of infinities!—  
Now music's cry is hushed at music's heart,  
And beauty knows the thing that beauty is.

## IX

I walk the noisy streets, and all the while  
Women and men throng me on every side,  
And suddenly falls something to divide  
Them the divine from me the vain and vile:  
Suddenly I am lonely as an isle  
In seas unvoyaged and unverified,  
And from me, wave on wave and tide on tide,  
The world recedes, and mile on endless mile.

Some call the world a shadow-world: to me  
It seems too much a world of flesh and bone,  
Of will and action, resolute and free,  
Loud as a tempest, solid as a stone.  
All these are real and must always be,  
And I alone a shadow, I alone.

X

I have an enemy far worse than hate,  
Far worse than danger, worse than any wrong  
That's cried upon the wind in any song,  
Or feared in prophecy of any fate.  
My bonds, impalpable and uncreate,  
Are each as sly as thought, and each as strong;  
And when I turn for hope where hopes belong,  
My enemy is always at the gate.

You alone can, dispersing my despair,  
Draw me from shadows into vital air:  
You alone heal me with your tranquil touch.  
To you it means so little, as you pass  
Like light along the fields: to me, alas!  
In solitude, it means so much, so much.

## XI

Love, do you love me? All the winds go by,  
And all the days therewith; and still, and still,  
The lonely tree upon the lonely hill  
Stands dark and changeless in the changing sky:  
Beneath it cry the waves, and the winds cry  
About it, and have never cried their fill;  
They cry for wasted faith and broken will,  
And every wave and every wind is I.

Love, will you love me when the winds forsake  
The hollow day and hollow night, and leave,  
In place of our warm human hearts that grieve,  
Only the lack of all worth grieving for?—  
When there's no faith to waste nor will to break,  
And the waves cry and the winds cry no more.

## XII

Once was I loved according to my need,  
When, for supreme assurance, breast to breast,  
We through the beat of mutual blood confessed  
The spirit's purpose in the body's deed.  
Then morning was my thought, and youth my creed,  
And spring my music; then—the ultimate test!—  
We did not plead with love to yield its best,  
We lived the best for which all lovers plead.

But now a note of difference brings despair;  
The leaping flame that fed the vaunting fires  
Flickers and pales; now breath can scarcely dare  
To tempt the moment of immense desires,  
And that great starry castle in the air  
Shakes, and doubt walks among the thousand  
spires.

### XIII

They say that dying men see all their past,  
But that, I think, can never be: the vice  
Of brainless brooding over passion's price;  
The surging dark; the day that stands aghast  
At its own cynic loveliness; the vast  
And idiot world of terror's fire and ice—  
These are for once, no soul could bear them twice;  
They kill us, but we are done with them at last.

We are done with them, we sleep, we shut our eyes;  
In death we are free and fortunate and wise—  
Yet, if that moment of my final breath  
Can call, from all my memories, you alone,  
Your beauty for my grief shall half atone,  
And life shall almost be worth while, in death.



#### XIV

A pretty picture of the innocent May,  
When night and day reciprocate the hour—  
The Milky Way a hawthorn hedge in flower,  
And every hawthorn hedge a Milky Way!—  
Such has love seemed to some: they have their day;  
They take their pleasant impotence for power;  
They are good and happy—who decries their  
dower?  
Who that has loved would not be ev'n as they?

For love is born in pain and bred to loss;  
Others it saves, itself it cannot save;  
Its dreams are thick with fears past dreaming  
of:  
The lover is naked; all he had, he gave:  
Only he bears, as Christ bore his own cross,  
The burden of intolerable love.

## XV

Despairs I have met and conquered—who has not?  
Man's high and restless heart is braced for these;  
He has his candour for the mysteries,  
His spring and summer for the years that rot  
Into oblivion; bravery is hot  
Against the cold leap of the seeking seas;  
The soul is lawful by its own decrees;  
And grief remembers what mere joy forgot.  
But happiness defeats me: in the sun  
I shiver with chill fear and sick surmise,  
Suddenly: when my easy task is done,  
I know my task too hard, my way too steep.  
Beauty is young and happy in your eyes,  
And when I see that beauty I must weep.

## XVI

I tracked my sin and bound it—but they err  
Who have set different worlds for love and sin :  
I forced my sin to silence, shut it in  
The night of memory where stars confer—  
Dumb stars and strong, sequel and harbinger :  
But all without is marred by what's within,  
And lo, my best thought to my worst akin,  
Myself half gaoler and half prisoner !

Shall it not be, when all things cease to be ;  
When God fulfils his purpose, and lets go  
The tortured twisting flames of life, and so  
Discrowns the mountain and dispels the sea—  
That he shall look in his own heart, and know  
The thing he caged, the thing he hurt, was he ?

## XVII

Come, dear, and play this game with me—undo

The pattern of mixed lives, the interplay

Of slender-footed shade and dancing day:

The glade is green and clear, the air is blue,

The dark leaves push between, the flames spill  
through,

And like a flight of starlings break away,

Till, netted in the shadows, they portray

The irreparable oneness of us two.

For thus two lives, divided and distract,

Obeys a common music, move together,

See double hopes curbed in a single act,

And hold one purpose by alternate tether.

The shade must answer where the flame must fall,

And each be saved in both or not at all.

## XVIII

Those were our freedoms, and we come to this!  
The climbing road that lures the climbing feet  
Is lost: there lies no mist above the wheat,  
Wherethrough to glimpse the silver precipice,  
Far off, about whose base the white seas hiss  
In spray: the world grows narrow and complete:  
We have lost our perils in the certain sweet:  
We have sold our great horizons for a kiss.

To every hill there is a lowly slope,  
But some have heights beyond all height—so high,  
They make new worlds for the adventuring eye.  
We for achievement have forgone our hope,  
And shall not see another morning ope,  
Nor the new moon come into the new sky.

## XIX

Where is our freedom sought, and where to seek?

The voices of the various world agree

The future's ours: to hope is to be free:

Only to doubt, to fear, is to be weak.

Have you not felt upon your calm, clear cheek

The kiss of the bright wind of liberty?

What more is there to ask, what more to be?

Peace, peace, my soul, and let the silence speak!

To hope is to be free? Nay, hope's a slave

To every chance; hope is the same as fear;

Hope trembles at the wind, the star, the wave,

The voice, the mood, the music; hope stands near

The chilly threshold of the waiting grave,

And when the silence speaks, hope does not hear.

## XX

There was a noise of voices in the wood,  
And then the shine of knives, and after that  
Only his lovely body lying flat,  
And dreadful bubbling of his bitter blood.  
I made a pillow for his head, a hood  
Of shadow for his eyes—he smiled thereat.  
They say that death's the only democrat,  
For all men die, the bad men and the good.

And is this all that we have done with life,  
And have we wasted living on this wise—  
The summer wood, the sudden noise of strife,  
The fading body and the swarming flies,  
With none to judge the justice of the knife,  
Or read the heart of him that smiles and dies?

## XXI

This is the horror that, night after night,  
Sits grinning on my pillow—that I meant  
To mix the peace of being innocent  
With the warm thrill of seeking out delight:  
This is the final blasphemy, the blight  
On all pure purpose and divine intent—  
To dress the selfish thought, the indolent,  
In the priest's sable or the angel's white.

For God's sake, if you sin, take pleasure in it,  
And do it for the pleasure. Do not say:  
'Behold the spirit's liberty!—a minute  
Will see the earthly vesture break away  
And God shine through.' Say: 'Here's a sin—I'll  
sin it;  
And there's the price of sinning—and I'll pay.'



## XXII

Three lovely angels guard the gates of Hell—  
Three great archangels with the saddest eyes  
That ever held memories of Paradise,  
As the dusk pool we know of in the dell  
Gathered last night a host of stars that fell,  
And kept them still and clear. The three surmise  
The purpose of their mournful enterprise:  
By name they are Michael, Raphael, Gabriel.

The guards of Heav'n have mournful work to do:  
They are Michael, Raphael, Gabriel by name:  
Their eyes are sadder than the fallen flame  
In the dusk pool we know of, I and you.  
Some souls say: 'It is Hell we are travelling to;'  
Some: 'It is Heav'n.' The angels are the same.

### XXIII

Our love is hurt, and the bad world goes on  
Moving to its conclusion : in a year  
This corn now reaped will come again to ear,  
The moon will shine as last night the moon shone;  
The tide, whose thought is the moon's thought, will  
don  
The silver livery of subjection. Dear,  
Is it not strange that hearts will hope and fear  
And break, when our hearts, broken now, are gone?

If this were true, life's movement would rebel,  
And curdle to its source, as blood to the heart  
When the cold fires of indignation start  
From their obscure lair in the body.—Well,  
If for us two to part were just to part,  
All years would have one pointless tale to tell.

## XXIV

In the old days came freedom with a sword.  
Ev'n so: but also freedom came with wings  
Fanning the faint and purple bloom that clings  
To the great twilight where our dreams are stored.  
Freedom was what the waters would afford  
That yet obeyed the white moon's whisperings,  
And freedom leapt and listened in the strings  
Of dulcimer and lute and clavichord.

In the old days?—But those old days are now.  
O merciful, O bright, O valiant brow,  
Can you seek freedom that way and I this?  
Not in the single note is music free,  
But where creation's climbing fires agree  
In multitudes, in flights, in silences.

## XXV

Shall we mark off our little patch of power  
From time's compulsive process? Shall we sit  
With memory, warming our weak hands at it,  
And say: 'So be it; we have had one hour'?  
Surely the mountains are a better dower,  
With their dark scope and cloudy infinite,  
Than small perfection, trivial exquisite,  
'Mid all that dark the brightness of a flower!

Lovers are not themselves: they are more, they are  
all:

For them are past and future spread together  
Like a green landscape lit by golden weather:  
For them the rhythmic change conjectural  
Of time and place is but the question whether  
Their God shall stand (as stand he must) or fall.

## XXVI

In you I see more than yourself, the thing,  
The proud and perfect thing, that now you are :  
I see you restless, young, irregular ;  
Unmarried yet, unmeet for marrying ;  
Slim as a flower-stem in a windy Spring,  
Shy as the first weak splendour of a star—  
With all your years untried, to make or mar—  
A child, presaging and remembering.

Is any life than a child's life more strange,  
Or any memory longer than a child's?—  
In you I see old age, whose thoughts can range  
Over a continent of woods and wilds  
And find how the kind towns at last befriend  
And the long road leads to the journey's end.

## XXVII

Between your two hands have I put my faith—  
You know not what a precious thing you hold,  
Rarer than alabaster or fine gold;  
A piece of God, a loving thought, a wraith  
Elusive as the word the sibyl saith  
When the ambiguous messages are told—  
A single spirit unshared, a manifold  
Of them whose journey is from birth to death.

Be careful of it, dear! If it should slip,  
And at your scornful feet should break in two,  
Therein would die more than our fellowship,  
More than the firm earth and ethereal blue!—  
It is not I whose heart's dear blood would drip  
From the sad wound—not I, not I, but you.

## XXVIII

The town of ending on the road of years,  
The little golden windows bright with rest  
In restless night, the welcoming warm breast  
Where the tired head may stoop itself with tears—  
What are they but a dream that disappears  
When the night draws its armies to the west,  
When the cold east is tortured by the zest  
Of dawn's new follies and returning fears?

The end of journeying there's none that knows:  
The slow o'ertake the swift, the weak the strong;  
Here the vague saint, there the gross sinner goes,  
Step matched with step, song interlaced with song.  
All we know of the wind is that it blows,  
And of the long road that the road is long.

## XXIX

God also is an artist in his way,  
Like these young men of the complacent brush :  
He made a canvas of the evening hush,  
And smeared it with a trembling veil of gray ;  
Then with the sunset fire made sudden play,  
Framing his hills in that fantastic flush,  
And tore it all and opened at a rush  
Arches and avenues of flaming day.

The artist sees the light behind the forms  
(So the wise tell us), and, unknowing, storms  
God's secret mind, the meaning of God's plan :  
Maybe the Master 'neath whose hand and eye  
Grew this impetuous pageant in the sky  
Has read the meaning of the mind of man.



XXX

I am frightened, sweetheart—that's the long and  
short

Of the bad mind I bear: the scent comes back  
Of an unhappy garden gone to wrack,  
The flower-beds trampled for an idiot's sport,  
A mass of vermin batt'ning there, a mort  
Of weeds a-fester, all the green turned black,  
And through the sodden glades of loss and lack  
The dead winds blown of hate and false report.

There was a music in the early air,  
When our young love was virgin as we were,  
Ripe for the rose, new to the nightingale;  
But now two ghosts walk showing each to each  
The empty grace of ceremonious speech,  
And I am frightened, and the air is stale.

### XXXI

This is the law of life: the same's the same

Only by virtue of its changing shape.

My dear, they have derived you from the ape,  
But, for the difference, God's to praise or blame.

Shall we be sorrowful and call it shame

Because, in love, desires of love escape?

Time is a virgin born to suffer rape:

We tamed the wild heart, and the heart is tame.

But here's the best of it—that, full of tears,

Supine across my arm, with lips athirst

For dizzying draughts of passion, you can win  
Back from the long and reasonable years,

From faith and patience, the sharp joy that first  
To virtue lent the savour of a sin.

## XXXII

I have moods in which I almost blame the wide  
And simple gesture of your liberal soul,  
Whereby I am enfranchised of the whole  
Of that great kingdom at a single stride.  
Said I : 'the whole'?—then do no hills divide  
Valley from valley, and no waters roll  
Unbridged, unplumbed?—can ev'n your gift  
control  
The still retreating solace still denied?

Why, to give all is to deny much more,  
Since consummation hungers for increase :  
Achievement is a prison, and release  
Comes not by op'ning of the dungeon door :  
There is one life to live, one world to explore,  
And not to ask for peace is to have peace.

### XXXIII

If you were nothing but a sight to share,  
A coloured grace, a bird of beauty preening  
Pale flames of plumage in the overweening  
Light of the insolent and crystal air,  
Still to my thought you would be more than fair—  
But lo, compassionate, out of glory leaning,  
You have called forth the music and the meaning  
From doubt, retreat, confusion and despair.

This is because you love me—all this scope  
Of happy courage and insurgent hope,  
This simple power to understand and save,  
This great contempt of shame, this careless trust  
In the divine occasion of our dust—  
This is the strength that love to beauty gave.

#### XXXIV

Your sleep is like a child's: the thoughts that roam,  
Vague in the lucid and diurnal vast,  
Here, in the night, are harmonised, held fast,  
Like music bounded in a temple's dome.  
Here is no eddy of wind or flight of foam,  
But such a peace as shall absorb the past  
When, with torn rigging and dejected mast,  
From the last voyage the last ship comes home.

Some cry in sleep—the failure of success  
Reaches to hurt them there: not so with you:  
You are so young in sleep, you touch the close  
That the beginning of desire foreknew,  
And all the interim in your loveliness  
Is quiet, knowing what none waking knows.

### XXXV

Why is it that the things we hope and fear  
Are merged in disappointment, and betray?  
That the fine fringes of the hour decay  
Before we grasp them; that the shadowed mere  
Flickers and murmurs and is never clear,  
And facts are always different from our play?  
November follows six months after May,  
But why is May not May when it is here?

Because the subtlety of things to be  
Dies in the pain of being; because we  
Must frame our visions for a coffin's length;  
Because what's lost is lost for ill or good,  
And what's to gain is never understood,  
And time is strong, and only time has strength.

### XXXVI

My dim tumultuous hell of sleep is blurred  
With shapes fantastic and unfortunate  
That make the gestures and the mouths of hate:  
An idiot gaping after a lost word;  
A green corpse from the green earth disinterred,  
Walking the world with the same arrogant gait  
As when, alive, it feigned to challenge fate;  
And broods obscene of fish and beast and bird.

Yet here, ev'n here, in the grotesque alcove  
And secret chamber of the unplumbed mind,  
Your sweetness penetrates, and brings the wind  
Of healing, and the innocent dew of love.  
Wise as the serpent, simple as the dove,  
To dove and serpent love alike is kind.

### XXXVII

Your beauty comes with banners, and the town  
That might resist you, armoured with time,  
Stoops to a tune, surrenders to a rhyme,  
Before your laugh puts all defences down :  
Your eyes have tamed the spears ; you bear the crown  
Of mercy ; pennants flutter and bells chime  
Delicious praise of you ; your glories climb  
The pinnacles that have forgot renown.

In perfect calm, in confident quietude,  
Where the only flags are feathery clouds of gold,  
And the only bells the sheep-bells from the wold,  
Or summons from the spire beyond the wood,  
We two sit hand-in-hand, and find it good  
To meditate, to wonder, to withhold.



### XXXVIII

The silver mist along the river dims  
The middle landscape and the distant hills;  
It waxes imperceptibly, and fills  
The evening with a sense of dreams and whims,  
And great Orion of the starry limbs  
Is blotted out, and melancholy kills  
Earth's wandering hopes with its insistent chills,  
And the late birds forget their twilight hymns.

The mist clings in your eyebrows and your hair—  
The silver starry web, the net of tears;  
Your slim and startled body, unaware,  
Clings in my arms for warmth; a thousand fears  
Torment the cloudy texture of the air,  
As, bit by bit, our known world disappears.

### XXXIX

Now must we gather up and comprehend  
The volume of vicissitude, and take  
Account of loving, for each other's sake,  
And ask how love began and how will end  
(If there be any end of love, O friend  
Of my worst hours and best desires!)—and stake  
Our all upon the sweetness and the ache  
Of what men's stories and God's stars intend.

You have my all: you are my all: you give,  
Out of your bounty and content of soul,  
The only strength that makes me fit to live—  
Since earth of spirit takes such heavy toll:  
Yet I, the weak, the faint, the fugitive,  
Stand here, an equal part of the great whole.

## XL

This is my plea before the accusing nod  
Of that imaginary judge whose frown  
Has held the giant generations down  
With the pretence that judgment comes from God :  
This is the wonder stirring in the clod :  
This is the angel speaking through the clown :  
This changes the poor girls who walk the town  
To innocent flowers, starring the April sod.

This is the secret, this is the clear voice,  
This is the little soon-forgotten word  
That the pale prophet in the desert heard  
When he looked up and saw the heav'ns rejoice :  
This is the law we know and will not know :  
Ev'n this is love. So be it: it is so.

## XLI

You told me I had saved you from the gloom  
Of dubious purpose, ardour unfulfilled :  
You said, you would not have the heart to build  
A house whereof I shared not every room :  
You said, without me life would be a doom  
Of vision mocked, truth pierced, and glory spilled ;  
A ship that knew no sea ; a field untilled ;  
A morning baulked of day ; a trance ; a tomb.

You said, to love me was to yield my due ;  
To serve was all you could of life require—  
You, you, said this, the incomparable you !  
The soul and satisfaction of desire !  
Whose beauty turns the waters into fire  
Of sunlight and of moonlight. Is it true ?

## XLII

I will believe the thing that you have said,  
    Though chances challenge it and doubts deny,  
    And every planet moving in the sky  
Mock it with music; though my thoughts be led  
Back and still back to that unhappy bed  
    Where my first faith laid itself down to die;  
    Though I be only such a thing as I,  
And all the living laugh, and all the dead.

The ocean has its treasure, and the earth.  
    I grudge to none his treasure—I have mine.  
    In solitude and darkness I incline  
To the last question of the final worth:  
But stronger than all death of light is birth  
    Of the one human light that burns divine.

### XLIII

Two stars there are that with an equal flame  
Illuminate the distant air, and trace  
Indifferent legends on the heav'nly face  
Of evening. As the altering evenings came  
To haunt and hurt my childhood, I would blame  
The hours that checked my stars, and mourn the  
case

Of those strange wanderers in the vast of space  
That night by night were different, and the same.

A child no longer, I must watch them still,  
And still they journey through the night: one  
leads,  
One follows—symbol of a thousand creeds,  
Since both move subject to an alien will!  
Each asks not each the doom that both fulfil;  
But the star summons, and the star succeeds.

#### XLIV

What have we stayed out of the rushing course  
Of days and weeks and months and years, that  
heap

Awaking on awaking, sleep on sleep,  
And drown occasion as a charge of horse  
O'erwhelms an enemy of little force  
And leaves the dead behind it? Must we weep  
Life drenched and dazed by that unpitying sweep,  
And nothing left of effort but remorse?

To have loved, my dear, is to have put to pause  
The violence of time—to have gathered up  
Experience like water in a cup  
And held it tranquil—to have found the key  
Of silence—to have mingled with the cause  
That bids the days, weeks, months, and years  
to be.

## XLV

Not to be bounded ev'n by life's content,  
But to get up and go out—to track  
The river of adventure back and back  
To the dark heart of the dark continent:  
Or to take ship, and seek what the seas meant  
By crying to the land: 'Alack, alack!'—  
To tempt the last horizon, and to crack  
Our final jest in face of the event—

All this were much: but should we see thereby  
Mountains more cloudy with the foam of streams  
Loosed from their sides, more bright with snow, more  
high?  
Should we be wiser in the ocean-themes  
Than love can make us?—should we draw our  
dreams  
From deeper founts of life, before we die?



## XLVI

Perhaps, perhaps, since silence comes so soon,  
And none can tell what torment waits obscure  
For when love and delight become manure  
In the small churchyard under the big moon,  
We should do better, while we may, to tune  
Our heartstrings to the tragic—to endure  
The tortured soul's extremes—than to be sure  
Of the small compass and the easy boon.

Easy and small? O lamentable love,  
O eyes uncomforted, untranquil hands,  
Is there one grief we are not native of?—  
One cruel hell's one corner that withstands  
Our search?—one page of pain we have not read?—  
Lovers need have no fear of being dead.

## XLVII

The little things, the little restless things,  
The base and barren things, the things that spite  
The day, and trail processions through the night  
Of sad remembrances and questionings;  
The poverties, stupidities and stings;  
The silted misery, the hovering blight;  
The things that block the paths of sound and sight;  
The things that snare our thought and break its  
wings—

How shall we bear these?—we who suffer so  
The shattering sacrifice, the huge despair,  
The terrors loosed like lightnings on the air,  
To leave all nature blackened from that curse!  
The big things are the enemies we know,  
The little things the traitors. Which are worse?

## XLVIII

If you had been a woman when the alarms  
Of childhood still were vagrant in my blood  
And I was driven by life's morning mood,  
You would have caught me up into your arms,  
And told me stories of escape from harms,  
And made me sure my fears were understood :  
So, childlike, now, I draw my simple good  
From the mysterious chamber of your charms.

But, dear, if you had been the dreaming child  
And I your refuge—would you have brought to me  
All childhood's infinite infelicity?  
O not less solitary, not less wild,  
Than when for you harsh life began to be,  
Here in my arms with life be reconciled !

## XLIX

We shall live, maybe, till our world turns gray,  
And peace comes on us as our powers grow less,  
And scarce we shall distinguish happiness  
From the opprobrious process of decay :  
Yet, 'mid the droop and pathos of that day,  
'Mid songs that cease and wings that acquiesce,  
The fading skies shall one last fire confess,  
And love in a great sunset burn away.

Or else, perhaps, because we loved so well,  
And found love apt to life, the end will prove  
A consummation rather than a change ;  
And, tired in the twilight, we shall spell  
Familiar meanings from the text of love,  
And only find the words a little strange.

## L

Give me love's absolution : all is clear  
And noble, and the peace long held in trust  
Is here enfranchised, and the dark of lust  
Breaks into beauty, being free. My dear,  
Whose lonely courage has affronted fear,  
If death should come between us now, it must  
Obey the spirit that retrieved our dust  
To this communion. Love has conquered here.

What of the road we strive and famish o'er?  
Lo, that old symbol of the waves unfree!—  
The shore still limits and defeats the sea,  
The sea still breaks its heart upon the shore:  
But love to us has taught the less and more,  
And where our journey was, our home must be.





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